

University of St Andrews - School of Medicine Handbook
SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDANCE FOR MEDICAL STUDENTS

1. As part of their professional behaviour medical students have a core responsibility to “sustain the public’s trust in the medical profession”. Social networking sites (SNS) often have open access in the public domain. Material posted is difficult to remove and this may result in postings having an unintended audience either currently or in the future. It is possible that postings may be considered defamatory.

2. The following is intended as practical guidance for medical students in the use of social networking sites, blogs or other digital media to:

- a. Ensure maintenance of the professional behaviour expected of medical students.
- b. Avoid unintended personal consequences.

3. **Absolute rules:**

- a. Patient confidentiality is paramount and no images or text should ever be posted which may directly or indirectly identify a patient.
- b. No images or text should be posted which may cause an individual patient, patient relative or patient group distress.
- c. No images or text should be posted which may cause concern from peers, teachers, health professionals or institutions involved in the education of medical undergraduates.

4. **Relative guidance:**

- a. Material posted on SNS may be accessed to “vet” job applicants, by the press or by patients or colleagues you are about to meet. Think about the kind of “virtual” first impression you want to make.
- b. Assume everyone can see / read everything.
- c. Assume material once posted can never be “unposted.”
- d. Be aware images others may capture of you may be uploaded and “tagged” with your name.
- e. Anonymise /restrict your publicly accessible digital persona.
- f. Use judgement & discretion as to who you accept as a “friend” on social networking sites.
- g. Maximise your privacy settings.
- h. Be aware of and periodically review your digital persona.
- i. Remember emails are vulnerable to redistribution. Do not assume the original intended recipient will be the only recipient.

5. **Guidance:**

GMC	https://www.gmc-uk.org/ethical-guidance/ethical-guidance-for-doctors/doctors-use-of-social-media
BMA	https://www.bma.org.uk/advice/employment/ethics/medical-students-ethics-toolkit/12-students-and-social-media